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Mr Chairman, distinguished delegates:

The University of London* greatly appreciates the opportunity to address the States Parties to the Convention. Our statement deliberately addresses just one of the items on your agenda this week: **Agenda item 8: How to enable fuller participation in the CBMs**. For the Convention to get the most value out of this agenda item in 2012 and 2013, this Meeting of Experts needs to gather as many good ideas as possible and transmit them in a form that will enable the Meeting of States Parties to make progress on them in December.

We recognise that more work needs to be done on practical ways of encouraging fuller participation. For example:

Governments should be aware of the lessons learned from experience of **collating national CBM returns**. For instance: 1) Collating CBMs requires some interpretation as to what should be included and what should not; technical expertise with an understanding of the political aim of the CBM mechanism is therefore crucial. 2) There is confusion and at times different understandings between States, and also between those collating the information and those providing it, of the level of information required and the kind of information that is useful on the submitted forms. 3) There are significant differences between States in their ability to obtain the required information due to disparities in resources and legal powers and to language difficulties. 4) Continuity through collator rotations can be greatly aided by comprehensive and up-to-date handover notes, as well as through close working relationships between predecessors/successors and technical experts.

If more widely understood, these lessons would encourage more governments to organise themselves so that their CBM returns can be collated efficiently, with benefits of continuity in institutional memory, and also made as manageable a workload for each government as is consistent with completeness and accuracy in the information collated.

Much thought has also been given to improving the **procedures for submission and processing of CBM returns, and to their availability**. This is an area in which many friends of the Convention regret that progress has been too slow. The better its procedures, the more likely the Convention will be to attract fuller participation in its CBMs.

In the interest of maximizing transparency, and disseminating the relevant information as widely as possible, many States Parties are now making their CBM returns publicly available or are working toward doing so. Making these

submissions public can greatly enhance their function. The knowledge, experience and expertise of civil society can contribute to the CBM communication process and to enhancing transparency between States Parties in several ways, including through: assisting States to collect and collate information for the CBMs; monitoring States' biodefense activities; collecting data from open sources; and processing the data submitted to generate accessible information. Restricting access to CBM returns risks building suspicion rather than confidence among important civil society stakeholders, and misses an opportunity to engage these same stakeholders in processes that might actually enhance the quality and completeness of the information submitted. However, given that most of the CBM returns will continue to be published on the restricted area of the BWC website, the CBMs will only enable limited transparency. They cannot be utilized by the BWC community as a whole. In an effort to remedy this, we propose that the current mandate of the ISU be expanded from "compiles and distributes data on CBMs" to "compiles, analyses and distributes data on CBMs" to allow for an objective trend analysis that would highlight qualitative and quantitative aspects without making reference to individual countries.

Last but not least, the Meeting of Experts needs to ask **what it is about the existing CBMs themselves that inhibits fuller participation**. Are they as well defined as they might be? Do the agreed forms ask the best questions for building confidence, or would additional categories of information or different questions be more useful? Are there ways in which the CBM process might be re-designed, in order to strengthen the Convention? Underlying your work on this agenda item will be conceptual differences and uncertainties. If these can be brought to the surface and recognised and discussed, in a conceptual consideration of CBMs, so much the better; otherwise the agenda item on 'enabling fuller participation' will be treated too narrowly.

Mr Chairman, distinguished delegates: We wish you a productive meeting and thank you for your attention.

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* The University of London dates from 1836, and is a major component of the higher education sector in the United Kingdom and beyond. It has evolved into a confederation of academically and financially autonomous colleges, which continue to share some central University of London institutions and a long history of joint endeavours in education and research. King's College London (founded 1829) was one of the two original colleges of the University of London. The London School of Economics & Political Science (founded 1895) became a college of the University of London in 1900.